SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUG SUPPLIES -- No. 18

A radio talk by W. W. Vincent, Chief, Western District, Food and Drug Administration, delivered October 9, 1930 through station KGO and associated National Broadcasting Company stations.

Good Morning, Label Readers! Our register of label readers is growing rapidly. I have covered quite a field and have talked about many food products and some medicines. I promised I would tell you more about drugs today, including some facts about radium preparations and fat-reducers. Their labeling comes to the attention of your food and drug agents because the Federal Food and Drugs Act defines the term "drug," in part, as "Any substance, or mixture of substances, intended to be used for the cure, mitigation or prevention of disease of either man or other animal." The law holds drugs as misbranded if their package or label bears any false or fraudulent statement, design or device regarding the curative or therapeutic effect of such article or any of the ingredients or substances contained therein.

In my first drug talk, I spoke primarily of antiseptic preparations. I told you that within the past three years we had made examination, both chemical and bacteriological, or more than 1000 supposedly antiseptic preparations. We found fewer than 100 which bore labels to which no exception was taken. In fact, two of the so-called antiseptic preparations actually contained live bacteria and many of the others were found, upon testing, not to kill or prevent germ growth. If after hearing that talk you didn't write for a copy of our booklet "Fake Antiseptics and the Law" you missed some entertaining as well as informative reading.

Your Federal Food and Drug Administration maintains a supervision of medicines imported into the country as well as those of domestic manufacture. I think I will tell you a story about some Ng-Ga-Py. You probably read considerable about that material in the newspapers late in 1926 when the Prohibition authorities decided it was a beverage and the importers went to court to prove it was medicated sufficiently to be non-potable. Your food and drug agents, my friends, knew Ng-Ga-Py many, many years before that. It was a Chinese medicinal wine imported from China for many years and had been examined frequently in the coast stations of the Food and Drug Administration.

With the passage of the Prohibition Act, it quickly became a medicine, and in October 1919 the importers put directions "For Medicinal Use" upon the package. Listen to the directions appearing, in English, upon a Chinese medicinal wine: "For weakness, lassitude and mental fatigue, take one teaspoonful diluted with water before retiring. For Rheumatism, Gout, Sprains and Bruises warm a small quantity and rub well into the affected parts." Other importations of this medicine and similar preparations continued to reach the country. No effort was made by the importers to bring the product into compliance with the requirements of the Food and Drugs Act, because we were insisting that all therapeutic claims as appearing upon the label were unwarranted. If they eliminated the medicinal claims the product then became an intoxicating beverage and naturally was contraband within the country. Finally, there were, in bonded warehouses at San Francisco, some

38,000 cases of medicinal wines of this type and, as liquor, they were said to be worth two million dollars. Analysis of these medicines showed them to be essentially sweetened alcoholic solutions varying from 30 to 50% of alcohol with very small amounts of non-potent vegetable extractives. The manufacturers claimed numerous ingredients present, among which were generally to be found Deer Horn, Tiger Gland, Seal Gland, Lizard Glands and Ginseng, together with many other supposed Chinese drugs for which there is no English synonym.

In 1926, the U. S. Attorney instituted forfeiture proceedings against the material and the case went to trial. One of your Food and Drug agents was there, testifying as to the composition of the products. Medical experts, after testing the material, testified it was of no value medicinally and, after a trial which lasted a week, the jury in forty minutes returned a verdict indicating that the product was a liquor and not a medicine. The Government had contended this all along. My friends, I cite that story to illustrate the rapidity with which alcoholic beverages, as well as numerous other products, become patent medicines when it serves the interests of the manufacturer to increase his sales.

You recall the "Flu" epidemic which swept our country early last year. It was almost a national calamity. The unscrupulous patent medicine manufacturer was awake to his opportunity. Within a month the bill boards, the newspapers, and street car cards were promising you cure of or relief from Influenza, providing you swallowed, or rubbed on or inhaled certain advertised preparations. Your Food and Drug Administration countered with a press release which stated that there is no known drug, or combination of drugs, which will prevent or cure influenza. Then the Administration served notice upon manufacturers that those making unwarranted claims upon the labels for their products would render themselves liable under the Federal Food and Drugs Act. The number of preparations offered to the public for the prevention and cure of influenza multiplied so rapidly that probably 1000 or more found their way into the channels of commerce before they could be checked. Many, many seizures were made at points all over the United States. Today you will find practically no medicines with reference to "flu" or "Grippe" upon the labels enjoying an interstate sale. Remember, I have already told you that fraud in connection with the sale of medicines is not completely ended when the labels are brought into full compliance with the provisions of the Food and Drugs Act. There is a broad field of general advertising open to the manufacturer. But when you buy a medicine compare the labeling claims with those made in the advertising and if the advertising claims are greater than those on the label, it is safer to be guided by the label statements.

We made a survey of the various radio-active products upon the market about a year ago and what do you think we found? Analysis for radium content was made upon hair tonics, bath compounds, suppositories, tissue creams, tonic tablets, face powder, ointments, mouth washes, demulcents, opiates, ophthalmic solutions, healing pads, and other preparations in solid, semi-solid and liquid form for which therapeutic value was claimed on the ground

of radio activity. We even found one article which consisted of a glass rod, one end of which was coated with a yellow substance enclosed in a glass bulb. This device when hung over a bed - according to the inventor - would disperse "all thoughts and worry about work and troubles and bring contentment, satisfaction and body comfort that soon results in peaceful restful sleep." Well, only 5% of the products claiming to be radio-active were found to contain material quantities of radium. There was one water sample, for which radio-activity was claimed, of which we found it would be necessary for the patient to drink 1957 gallons per day in order to obtain a minimum daily dosage of radio-activity. My friends, the distribution to the general public without discrimination or adequate supervision of highly radio-active products, or devices for rendering water or other substance highly radio-active, is of very questionable propriety. Radium in active dosage, you know, is potent for harm as well as for good and should be administered with great caution. Remember, when you contemplate buying these radio-active preparations or devices, which are usually expensive, you may do yourself real harm. Our advice to you is to use such a potent drug as radium only under the direction of a physician.

Now, for another real humbug. This is where they catch you women. You are either too fat or too thin. There are many advertisements that appeal to you who would regain a slim and graceful figure. You don't have to diet. The advertiser says you don't. This appeals to those who are particularly stout. Generally, the preparations which are most efficacious contain thyroid and laxative. Thyroid is a glandular material, secured principally from sheep and hogs. Its promiscuous use is often harmful. It should not be given except under the advice of a physician personally familiar with the subject's physical condition. Death has followed over-dosage with a preparation containing thyroid. Another poisonous drug, Poke Root, is sometimes used in fat reducing preparations. Analysis shows nothing whatever in some of the so-called fat-reducers that would have the slightest effect in reducing flesh. One of the preparations coming to our attention guaranteed the reduction in weight of a pound a day. That promoter claimed a process of elimination of foods without digestion. If his preparation did what he claimed, it would probably eliminat any heed of digestion.

Have any of you tried out these preparations wherein the chemical suppli is to be added to the water in which you bathe? Those chemicals are sometimes of such a nature that they form a sort of curd in the water after the patient has bathed. The manufacturer would have you believe that that curd is fat and surplus tissue removed from the body.

Remember, now, the medical specialists in the Department of Agriculture state that the only safe method of weight reduction known to the present-day medical profession is careful diet and proper exercise. And these, to be effective, must be continued for long periods. In some cases it is unwise for fat people to try to reduce weight rapidly. As a general rule, the attempts to reduce, made by fat people should be under the guidance of skilled physician. The loss of health, energy and strength is a high price to pay for the removal

of a few pounds of supposed surplus flesh. So, before you take up any of these preparations, keep in mind that there is no drug or mixture of drugs known to the medical profession at the present time that can be offered for the promiscuous use of the public in reducing weight that does not have some element of danger.

Hair removers, freckle removers, preparations to break the tobacco habit, and toilet preparations are not amenable to the Food and Drugs Act unless intended or represented directly or indirectly to be useful for the cure, mitigation or prevention of a disease. Excessive use of alcohol and tobacco are habits. Freckles and excessive hair are physical conditions not necessarily associated with disease. Excess fat is frequently the symptom of a disease.

You see there are limitations to the scope of the Federal Food and Drugs Act. With respect to drugs, you should know and remember --

First, The manufacture of a drug product does not need a permit or license to operate. (We have found plumbers, salesmen, blacksmiths, draymen, in fact, people from all walks of life, who have only the most limited knowledge of the treatment of disease, manufacturing proprietary remedies.)

Second, The law does not sanction or authorize approval of labels.

Third, Unless the product enters interstate or foreign commerce, or is manufactured and offered for sale within a territory, or the District of Columbia, it is not subject to the Federal law.

Fourth, The Federal law does not apply to statement of curative effects made in advertisements in newspapers, magazines, or billboards, by radio, or by any other means except those accompanying the package.

Fifth, Anything can be used in a drug preparation without label declaration, except the following: alcohol, morphine, opium, cocaine, heroin, alpha and beta eucaine, chloroform, acetanilid and chloral hydrate. When those substances, or their derivatives, are used, the label must declare their presence and amount.

Sixth, The law does not require a label declaration of quantity of contents as it does in the case of food. Weight, measure, or numerical count stated must be correct.

Seventh, The law provides certain standards of purity for drugs. Those standards are published in the U. S. Pharmacopoeia and National Formulary. Products at variance with the standards may be sold, providing the label plainly shows that they are not official preparations and shows the extent of their variance from the standard.

When you keep these limitations in mind and when you know that medical science is not acquainted with any mixtures of drugs, or medicines which in themselves are competent treatments or cures for influenza, scrofula, tuberculosis, pneumonia, high blood pressure, tumors, cancer, pyorrhea, Bright's disease, lost vigor, asthma, catarrh, boils and those diseases peculiar to certain organs, such as kidney disease, liver, stomach or head ailments - does it not behoove you, when buying drug products, to use all your intelligence and discrimination?

This concludes my eighteenth talk. If you want this information on drugs in printed form, or if you want the booklet on "Fake Antiseptics and the Law", or the information on the many food products I have told you about, drop a postcard to W. W. Vincent, U. S. Food and Drug Laboratory, San Francisco. It is free for the asking.

Next week I will speak of sweeter things. I will tell you about Dessert preparations - pudding powders. And, I shall tell you a story.
